

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-21 are pending. No claims are amended, cancelled, or added.

The outstanding Official Action objected to the declaration; objected to the Abstract; and allowed Claims 1-21.

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indication of allowed subject matter.

Applicants respectfully traverse the objection to the declaration for the following reasons.

According to MPEP § 602.03, an examiner with full signatory authority may waive minor deficiencies in the body of the oath or declaration where the deficiencies are *self-evidently cured* in the rest of the oath or declaration.

Applicants acknowledge that the filing date for Japanese Patent Application No. 2001-024557 is January 31, 2001 instead of January 31, 2002, which is the date listed in the declaration. However, because the serial number of the Japanese application starts with the year that the application is filed (i.e., 2001), Applicants submit that the deficiency of listing the year of the Japanese application as 2002 is self-evidently cured in Applicants' declaration.

Furthermore, according to MPEP 201.13, a priority claim can be made "by submitting an application data sheet specifying a foreign priority claim." Applicants respectfully submit that the Application Data Sheet submitted on January 30, 2002 properly claims priority to Japanese Application 2001-024557 and also correctly lists the filing date of this application.

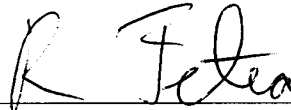
Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that this deficiency is minor. Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to waive the deficiency.

The Abstract is amended, as suggested by the outstanding Official Action, to remove formal claim language. Accordingly, Applicants submit that the Abstract is in compliance with M.P.E.P. § 608.01(b).

Consequently, in view of the present response and in light of the foregoing comments, it is respectfully submitted that the present invention is in condition for formal allowance and an early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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